

The Ball State Center for Professional Selling: A Marketing Strategy

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

By

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Abstract

This paper is the creation of a marketing strategy plan for the Center for Professional Selling at Ball State and it allows for a look inside a very unique business model that requires a level of creative problem solving outside of the realm of many traditional marketing tactics. I look at the current state of Ball States Sales Program and from that assess a marketing strategy that they could implement to grow and strengthen their brand. The first part of the paper examines the current state of existence for the Center, and the second examines strategies they could implement to grow their brand. The final section of the paper lays out an action plan that clearly proposes actions and guidelines for an optimized marketing campaign.

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I would also like to thank Deva Rangarajan for giving me the opportunity to be extremely hands on when running the Center for Professional Selling's social media, and also allowing me to write this paper on the Center. In addition to this I would like to thank every professor I have learned from in the Ball State Marketing Department for the well-rounded and engaging educational experience they gave me.

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Process Analysis

Going into my final semester at Ball State I was faced with the task of deciding what exactly I wanted to put together for my senior thesis. As I am majoring in both Economics and Marketing I had a wide range of things I could write a paper on, but I decided that the most relevant would be to focus on marketing, as it is the field that I will be going into. Having spent the last four years consuming as much information about marketing as I could this still left me with a large area of topics that I could approach, and forms of project I could use. The one thing I knew is that I wanted to write something that would engage me and I could feel was giving me real world applicable experience.

This is what led me to think about the projects I had done at Ball State that I had learned the most from and had gotten the most real world experience from completing. The first project I had thought of was a marketing proposal I wrote with the help of three other teammates. While this project was enjoyable I found myself unsatisfied as we wrote it for the brand Boxedwater, which we had no actual connection to and had to take guesses about much of the company, as many of our proposals were entirely fictional. The idea of writing a paper like that on an actual client that I could talk to and come up with real solutions to real problems was something that very much interested me. The other project that stuck out to me was my time running the social media for the Ball State Center for Professional Selling. This was part of a class where me and a team of two others were placed in charge of running the clients social media, and putting reports and updates together for them.

With these two projects in my head I tried to figure out how I could use them to put together a personalized project that I could call my own. What I ultimately realized is

that I could combine them to create a project where I get to take the real world experience I have had working for the Center and combine it with the more theoretical practice I have gotten from marketing proposal to create something very new. Having the opportunity to work specifically with a client to put this project together would allow me to not just take a structure and fill in the blanks, but rather figure out specific wants and needs of the client in order to create a truly unique paper. It would give the ability to genuinely create a real-world marketing proposal that would stand out from any project I had ever put together before.

From my previous semester I had created both a relationship with the head of the Center for Professional Selling, and had collected a wide range of knowledge on the current state of their marketing. The Center exists under the umbrella of the Ball State Marketing Department, but is in itself a unique thing. This creates a situation where they have the support of the Marketing Department, but also can create a bit of their own brand. I decided that would be an extremely important aspect I could focus on, as the Center does not have a wide range of effort being put into the creation of an individual brand image. This would give me the perfect opportunity to put together a proposal that would address any problems I saw, and more importantly give recommendations for harnessing the positive aspects of their current brand.

With the help of my advisor I then set out to put together an outline that could address the specific case that I was examining. I used the original outline of the project I did on BoxedWater as a guide, but many of the points would not make sense for my project. This is a major aspect of why I was very excited for this project as it gave me the opportunity to break down the very unique problems that the Center may be facing and

come up with unique solutions. This is often the core of marketing in the real world as every issue is different with any number of variables leading to new and creative solutions, but unfortunately marketing projects in class can begin to feel like fill in the blank regurgitation. With my outline put together I set out to create the rough plan for my paper and collect the information necessary to get me to the final steps of finishing the work.

When putting it together I found that the main issue I ran into was exactly the key reason I wanted to do the project. The Center operates very differently from many classical businesses, which means their revenue streams and the “product” they offer are very different from what most of my classes had taught me to expect. This was not a negative though, as it gave me the opportunity to think outside the box and come up with practical solutions that may only make sense to an educational Center like this. My advisor helped me with many of my sticking points and helped get me on track and toward the final step of finishing the paper.

Another aspect of this paper that made it quite unique was the fact that outside of the help from my professor I was constructing it on my own. Marketing both in education and in real-world practice almost always involves some kind of group effort. Having more people involved almost always benefits the problem solving and information collection necessary to properly pull off an affective marketing campaign. This project pulled me out of that expectation and left me on my own to decide what decisions I thought would be best. I found this aspect incredibly useful, because while I will most likely work in teams in my workspace it is vital that I have the ability to confidently make decisions on my own.

This paper largely focuses on the specific issues that the Center faces, but that did not mean that I only thought of them when writing it. This is an analyses put together with the head of Ball States program in mind, but it also takes into account other audiences that could read it. The way it was written takes into account that other audiences may read it such as students trying to put together a similar project, or other professors who may be trying to implement these strategies in their educational centers. It could be a project that is only intended for a professional audience, however I thought that it would be the most well rounded if I wrote it in a way that more then one audience could find it beneficial.

Ultimately, this project pushed me as a writer and as a future marketing professional. However, it was extremely rewarding and gave me a lot of space to challenge myself and apply what I have learned through my time at college. I feel confident that I could put together a relevant and professional report for any client thrown at me, and that confidence is worth much more then just the paper. This project is loosely based off of a framework that I got from another class, but ultimately I feel that I made it something entirely unique and representative of my skill.

The Ball State University Department of Marketing offers a large portfolio of well-designed tools and recourses to help provide in-depth learning experiences for its students, and one of its most unique resources is the Ball State Center for Professional Selling, also known as the Sales Center. From crafting specially designed classes that focus in the field of professional selling to hosting sales competitions that are attended by students from across the nation, the Center for Professional Selling focuses on giving students opportunities to advance their future goals. While these kinds of educational resources exist in every field, it should be noted that a program this well established does stand out, as many other universities will have some resources for students interested in professional sales, but lack a dedicated center or distinct degree concentration. Having this level of product makes Ball State University's Marketing Department stand out among its peers and puts it on the national map for students who are looking to hone their sales abilities or pursue a career in sales.

The way that these resources are presented to students must not be taken lightly, and a fully fleshed out strategy should exist in order to deliver proper and impactful messaging to the multiple audiences of the Center. To best analyze this we will first perform an environmental analysis to highlight the current state of the Center. After that we will cover the research that was done in order to construct this paper. Finally, we will cover an action plan that can be derived from the research that was previously discussed. This report will aim to clearly and concisely put together the current state of the Ball State Center for Professional Selling, and through analyzing its entire current product, will provide conclusions and recommendations for marketing and outreach guidelines that would further the current state of its product.

I. Situational Analysis

A. Environmental Analysis:

To lay even more groundwork for the current state of the Sales Center it is important that we analyze where it sits in terms of the environment that surrounds it. While there are many internal factors that will shape the potential growth trajectory of the

sales center it is vital that they are aware of the current effect of potential sociocultural, economic, and political factors.

i. Sociocultural:

Understanding the sociocultural factors that can impact the Sales Center can be a difficult task as understanding the slightly ambiguous state of the Sales Center's product. For example, you could look at the sociocultural expectations in our current society in regards to this degree being a business degree. The Washington Post, for example, highlighted in 2018 that business degrees, "account for about one out of every five bachelor's degrees awarded each year."¹ This would seem to imply that there is a consistently high demand for degrees in business from our current societal landscape, however that same article goes on to argue that non-math focused business degrees fail to deliver consistently high paying jobs.² For this reason it is important for the Sales Center to make sure it is helping get students use their business degree to get into a job where they can make the kind of money that they are desiring in order to satisfy the culturally perceived need for that.

An additional aspect of the current socio-cultural landscape that can have an impact on the Sales Center is the current societal views on higher education as a necessity. While this leans into the political analysis (and this will be discussed further in that section) there is a growing belief among Americans that higher education is deemed essential for our current work force, and, as a result, pricing lower-income students out of being able to receive it is problematic. Research from the Brookings Institute (displayed below) shows some of the way that income level of students dramatically affects the likelihood of them getting a specific level of education.

¹ Jeffery Seilngo, "Business is the Most Popular College Major," *Washington Post*, January 28, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/01/28/business-is-the-most-popular-college-major-but-that-doesnt-mean-](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/01/28/business-is-the-most-popular-college-major-but-that-doesnt-mean-2)
² Seilngo, "Business is The Most."

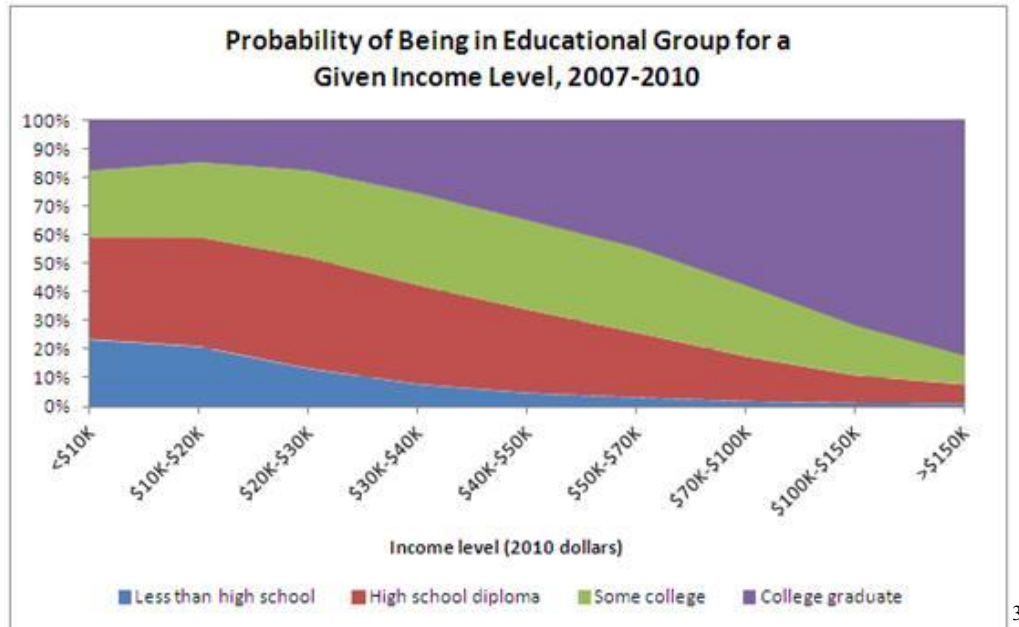


Figure 1. Probability of Being in Educational Group for a Given Income Level,
Brookings Institute

As society currently views higher education as an important stepping stone, it is critical for the Sales Center to understand that view and how it plays a part in making sure that it can provide as much advantage to students of all backgrounds as possible. In doing this they will not be able to create a more well-rounded program that helps as many students as possible, but will also stay in front of societal concerns about the impact of lower-income students being overlooked or priced out.

ii. Economic:

One major consideration that must be taking into account when looking at the future ability of the Sales Center to be able to grow is its ability to maintain financial security in the current economic climate. We can safely consider the key deliverable the Center is creating to be the education it is delivering to its students and the key consumer to then be the students, which means that to be able to stay financially stable, money has

³ Michael Greenstone and Adam Looney, "Education is the Key To Better Jobs," *Brookings Institute*, September 17, 2012. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2012/09/17/education-is-the-key-to-better-jobs/>.

to be flowing in. Money does have to be allotted from university management, but for the most part there should be an expectation that money exists to be dispersed among programs. Take into account, for example, this graph put together by Medium looking at national average tuition expenses in relation to those expenses if increasing at the rate of inflation.

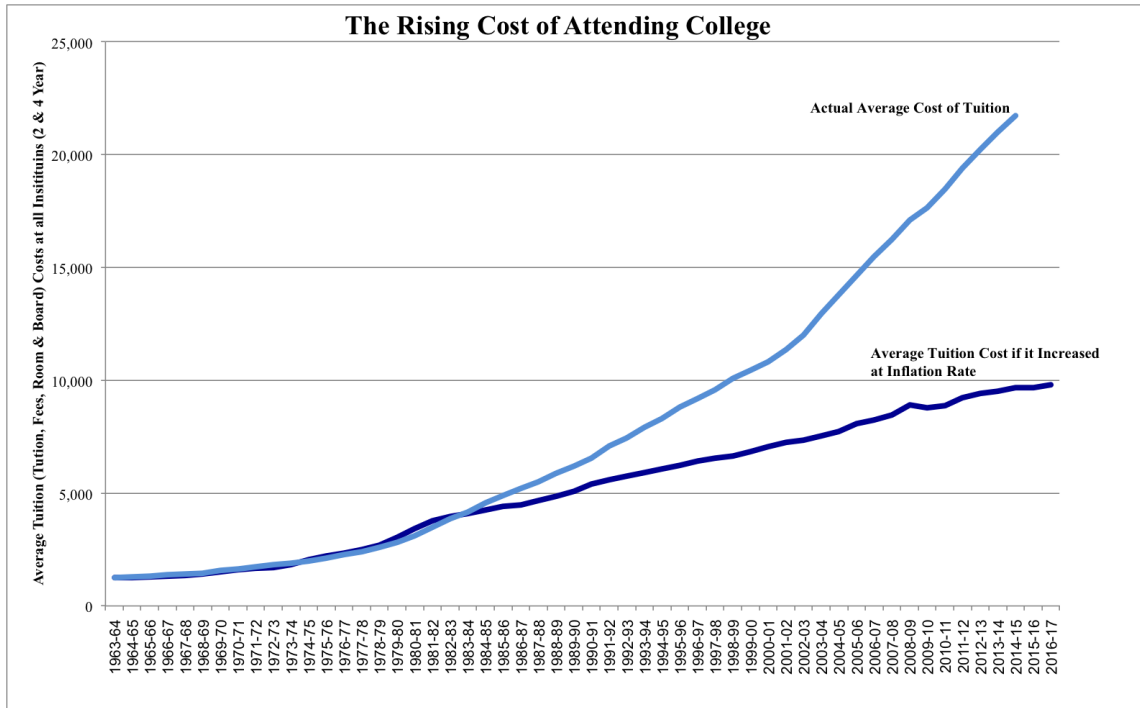


Figure 2. The Rising Cost of Attending College, Medium

As clearly demonstrated here, universities across the nation are finding ways to consistently raise the amount that students are expected to pay at a greater scale than that which the current inflation rate would expect. This means not just that there consistently has been more money coming in for departments like the Sales Center to use, but they can expect the university to continue to find new and innovative ways to bring in greater revenue streams from the students. In addition, Ball State University has been seeing record numbers of enrollment over the last several years meaning that even if the national

⁴Noa Maltzman, "Keeping Up With Modern Society," *Medium.com*, May 8, 2017. <https://medium.com/@noamaltzman/keeping-up-with-modern-society-rising-cost-of-higher-education-ce451f052428>.

economy as a whole sees major issues, the University will still have the increased revenue from the previous years.

iii. Political:

The Sales Center must exist within a political climate that has a hand in much of what it can and cannot do as a result of being a public university, but there is one major political trend that cannot be ignored as it has the ability to impact the entire future of the Sales Centers revenue stream and ability to function. This movement is the current political push to make tuition for higher education free for students. Both the 2020 democratic primary candidates Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders ran on some form of student debt forgiveness as a key policy point.⁵ While neither of them managed to win the nomination, their push shows a clear movement toward some view of this being a possible future. This kind of legislation would dramatically impact the way that universities function and receive the money that they do from tuition. While this is not currently impacting the Sales Center, it poses a massive change that could happen in the future, and is something that they must be prepared for if they want to weather future political changes.

II. Sales Center Analysis

The Center is a key part of the multi-faceted Department of Marketing at Ball State. While being under the umbrella of the Department of Marketing, it is paired alongside the Center for Advancement of Digital Marketing and Analytics (CADMA) and the Marketing Department's fashion programs to create a diverse set of specializations within the department.

By focusing on professional selling, the Center focuses on giving students who get a major in professional selling the tools they will need to be able to enter into a high paying and competitive position in sales. This can include either an inside or outside sales position in a wide range of professional fields. In addition, the center is able to also

⁵ Zack Friedman, "Elizabeth Warren: Heres my Plan to Cancel Student Loan Debt," *Forbes*, June 17, 2019. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zackfriedman/2019/06/17/elizabeth-warren-student-loan-debt-forgiveness/#2687a9875e7b>.

provide the basics of professional selling to students from other majors who simply wish to add an additional skill to their résumé. As an institution, the Sales Center is also able to take advantage of the other resources from within the Marketing Department in order to bolster its efforts.

At the Center for Professional Selling students have a wide variety of recourses that they can access at any given time. As a result, understanding exactly what the product it provides is a somewhat layered analysis. Any educational institution, by design, has to provide to an extent both a service (the classes) and a good (the diploma). However, the overwhelming majority of the Center's outputs can be classified as exclusively services so as such we can treat this as being the main form of production for the Center. Within these services, the Center provides a wide range of recourses for students, alumni, and corporate partner. To understand what exactly the Sales Center's brand message is truly is to understand what it is offering to those it can connect with.

A. Resources:

i. Majors:

One of the most direct recourses that Center gives it students is its academic recourses and its major. In addition to this, it also provides optional minors and concentrations to students who are looking at growing their professional sales knowledge without committing entirely to a major. This is important as it gives them the ability to get a tangible good that they can carry with them throughout their career to show any potential employers that they have a unique set of skills already when coming into a job. This resource is also probably the most important because it is the one most directly tied to the activities of the University. Every department at Ball State can have varying goals and objectives, but at the end of the day the thing they have to provide is a high quality educational experience. As a result, the Sales Center is no different and must focus a large amount of their recourses on the way that they can provide added benefit to all Ball State students.

ii. Sales Team:

The Sales Team and also the Center's connection to sales competitions are a very important aspect of the product they deliver. They are able to integrate the in-class education with a much more real-world practical situation in order to help their most invested students hone their skills. This not only helps the students strengthen their abilities, but also helps them by giving them the opportunity to be seen by prospective employers who may be recruiting from these sales competitions. In addition to having their team, the center also hosts an annual sales competition that plays an integral role in improving the experience the center can provide. It gets various students and employers on to Ball State's campus and provides a chance for them to interact with one another. This event is a large draw and absolutely provides value to all of the Center's different types of customers.

iii. Career Opportunities:

A backdrop to the Center's educational goals is the larger-picture goal of creating employable students. On this account, the Center takes additional measures to try and ensure that its students can get good jobs in the field they desire. One aspect of this service they provide is the annual Sales Career Fair. This is a separate event from the campus-wide job fair and focuses specifically on employers who come in looking for students to employ in sales. This event is a free and very helpful recourse for students, which adds value to their experience. The Center also uses its connections to have professors bring in professionals from various fields in order to have them discuss topics with their class, as well as to help make connections that the students can potentially use to get jobs in the future.

iv. Alumni Connections:

Another way that the Center is able to provide added value to its potential customers is through its resources to keep alumni connected with both the university and one another. The center has created a vast network of professionals across the nation able to connect with others because of this shared ground. The Center for Professional selling can give alumni both new and old the ability to grow their network and improve their

chances of moving forward in their career path. While it should be made clear that this is admittedly a much smaller aspect of the Center's services, it is still an important one and should be taken seriously.

v. Corporate Partners:

Rounding out the Center's services is the aspect of what they can provide to corporate partners. The Center currently has 19 corporate partnerships with levels of commitment ranging from a category of "Gold Partner" all the way down to the level of "Introductory Partner." These services include a variety of tools that the Center uses to help connect its top-of-the-line students with perspective employers. This includes providing them with a booth at the annual Sales Career Fair and even giving them the opportunity to bring in recruiters to meet these students. In addition the Center also uses its sales competition to bring these partners to campus in order to have them see the talent that is competing in the event. The services that the center provides to these corporate partners are a strong backbone to all the other focuses of the Center and make it much easier for students to get the added value they desire from its programs.

III. Consumer Analysis

As the modern age of customer-focused selling has come into its own, every industry has had to find a way to make its focus on how to add the value that its customers want. Education especially has been put under a microscope, as the needs of a modern student can change dramatically over time, and, if not adequately met, can lead negative ramifications of decreased enrollment and funding for an educational institution. This is why it is vital for us to analyze who exactly the consumer of the Ball State Sales Center is both in practice and in regard to who their target market is before we discuss what marketing strategy changes they could make to improve their connectedness to the consumer.

A. Students:

The most direct consumer that the Center For Professional Selling targets and reaches is the student. These students are overwhelmingly undergraduate students ranging in age anywhere from 18-23, although there are some graduate students who use its recourses as well as non-traditional students who may be older then this. These students are also mostly in line with the general demographic make up of Ball State University making them predominantly Caucasian students from middle to upper middleclass households. The Center's more diverse demographic students such as those from lower income homes or those who would be classified as other then Caucasian are important and should not be over looked, but the prior demographic is overwhelmingly the majority. On a psychographic level these students are driven by most of the same things that any student would be. They desire to advance their education and also give themselves the most opportunities to succeed in their future career field.

The center does also have to understand the importance of the different types of students it is trying to recruit. Prospective students can be both high school students who are not sure whether they want to go to Ball State, or could be students who already attend Ball State but are not sure what degree they want to get. These students have different motivations and as a result, the Center has to be able to cut through directly with their messaging in order to target both groups with messaging that will be most impactful for them.

The transaction process between students and the Center comes in the form of tuition that the student pays to the university. This does not however directly get money into the hands of the Center, as they must have those funds directed to them from the university. This indirect transfer of funds makes it vital for the Center to pay even more attention to what both current and perspective students want as even though they are getting students to participate in the program they also need them to be advocates to the university in order to make sure that funds are continued to be earmarked for the Center and its endeavors.

B. Alumni:

As a customer base, alumni can face a wide range of needs, but are an extremely important customer base to the Center. All the Center has to do is provide them with a platform to get connected and involved and the Center will hopefully be able to get payment from them in the form of donations. On a demographic level, this base will have many of the same characteristics of the students as they were once students themselves, but they can have a much wider and diverse pool in some ways. Most distinctly they are made up of any age range from roughly 23 onward and can have varying levels of income. On a psychographic level they can also be motivated by many different things, but probably the most important aspect for the Sales Center is that they all can theoretically be motivated to give back to the organization that helped get them to where they are. Not all alumni will feel this way, but as long as the Center is providing enough added value to its students then hopefully it can help motivate these alumni to get involved.

The transaction process with alumni is very important to the Center as unlike with students it is a direct transaction. Donations can be made very easily that go from alumni directly to the Center. They can also create non-monetary transactions by way of having alumni come in for events or to connect with current students. While this is not a direct payment, it is a way that the Center can get value out of its alumni.

C. Corporate Partners:

Corporate partners present yet another diverse type of customer, as they are not individuals, but rather purchasing units. This means that there is not necessarily a clear “demographic” that makes up a prospective or current corporate partner. This presents a challenge that the Center has to be prepared to face any time that they begin to build a connection with a prospective partner as they must be able to know who the different actors within the decision-making unit are, and what specific needs they have. Overall this decision-making unit can include recruiters, gatekeepers, corporate leaders, and many more. To best handle this challenge the Center must adequately understand the many points of contact they have with the decision-making unit and from that learn how to move it throughout the sales process in order to get them to agree to be a partner.

The transaction process for this customer is quite straight forward as it is probably the most traditional direct transaction. The corporation is able to tell the Center what exactly it is they desire and the Center can offer them whatever level of partnership best fits those needs. After this, the money is simply moved from the partner to the center without the need of any major middlemen. The terms of the level of partnership can be easily agreed upon and that lets the Center feel confident about adding additional partners without much hassle.

IV Competitive Analysis

As an educational institution, it could be simple for those in charge of the Sales Center to spend most of their time focusing internally on the quality of services they provide. However, in the modern educational world to succeed any program needs to be able to compete. There are so many options for students in the country today and that means that any institution needs to find a way to stand out. For this reason, it is imperative that we understand the key competitors of the Center in order to better understand what they need to do to continue to draw attention to their program. For this, we will cover both competitors who offer direct alternatives to their program (direct competitors) and those that may not seem like competitors but could still stand to draw away customers (indirect competitors).

A. Direct competitors:

Direct competitors are those that may be the most obvious and easily thought of for the Sales Center. It is other programs and options that their customers could go to. For example, Purdue University's program for Selling and Sales Management is offering a very similar service to students that are in the state of Indiana. This means that when attempting to recruit students Ball States program must be able to find ways to distinguish and differentiate themselves from Purdue's program. As a part of Purdue's Division of Consumer Science it has all of the resources that any other program at Purdue would have. It should however be noted that it is a major under the College of Health and Human Services at Purdue, which is distinct from that of Ball State's program in the

College of Business. Purdue is a top ranked school in the state and as a result gets some of the most competitive students from both Indiana and the surrounding area. This is important as it means that the program can have the added value of bringing highly-skilled students together, which can be seen as beneficial even before the educational process begins. One major aspect of the Purdue Center for Professional Selling is the way they brand their program. They brand themselves as truly seeming like an independent center, which means that they have very limited mentioning of their educational program. Instead they focus on the independent events that the Center puts on such as sales competitions or corporate partnerships. While still using the Purdue branding this gives them the chance to exist almost outside of the realm of just a regular educational institution and gives them the ability to branch out into a more competitive space of being almost being an external resource for its students.

Another key competitor that the Sales Center has is the Baylor University Center. This program is obviously on the other side of the country, but offers an elite program that could absolutely poach students who are looking to get an high quality sales education. One key take away that can be gathered from any university program is looking at what they highlight in their direct Google searches. This plays a key role in strategic search engine optimization, and also directly impacts what people searching the program are able to easily find. As a result it can be a direct line into the most important core aspects of the program, and Baylor is no different.

[Center for Professional Selling | Baylor University](#)

"Baylor's Center for Professional Selling program is second to none. It is truly an exemplary, 'best in class' educational program. Few programs are able to come ...

You visited this page on 4/7/20.

Students

ProSales students are bright, with an average GPA of 3.44. In ...

Prospective Students

Alumni Perspective. Image. Sam Azide, BBA '17. IBM. "[Based on ...

Role Plays

Baylor requires all students to complete a Role Play Consent ...

Corporate Partnerships

Our 2020-2021 Partnership packages are outlined below ...

About Us

"More than 50% of US college graduates, regardless of their ...

Corporations

Corporations affirm that ProSales students are prepared to make ...

6

Figure 3. Google Results for search of “Baylor University Sales”

Here, you can see the way that the program highlights the aspects that are at its core. This is extremely important analysis as it shows that on almost every front the key things that this program is highlighting are also the same things that Ball State’s program is competing in. Baylor’s program is extremely focused and as a result, Ball State has to be ready to watch out for their influence even with the major distance in geography. Being located in Texas, they have close proximity to any companies headquartered in the Dallas Fort Worth area, Austin, Houston, or San Antonio area, and if these companies are nationally operating they may be companies that Ball State would seek a partnership with as well. Baylor provides not just a key competitor to Ball States program, but also exists as a helpful benchmark setter for national expectations.

B. Indirect Competitors:

Obviously other sales programs should be compared and focused on when discussing the competitive nature of the Center for Professional Selling, but also it should be noted the importance of competition that does not necessarily appear as direct. This is

⁶ Google Search. Accessed April 15, 2020.

<https://www.google.com/search?q=baylor+university+sales&oq=baylor+university+sales&aqs=chrome.69i59j0l7.3967j1j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>.

anything that can exist as an opportunity cost for students joining the Centers program and is a large part of why the Center must provide added value. For the most part the biggest competition in this aspect is that of alternative programs at Ball State. For students who are trying to figure out what they want to major in, it can be a very large decision for them to be able to understand who and what they are going to do and the way a program markets itself to these students can be a deciding factor.

One large competitor here is CADMA. This is one of the other branches within the umbrella of the Department of Marketing and as a result can very easily take away students who may be thinking about going into the sales program. There is a limited number of classes that a marketing student can take and deciding between a sales management class and a digital marketing class can seem like a small decision to them, but in fact can be a big deal for each perspective programs funding. CADMA's marketing has the same type of restrictions on it that the Center for Professional Selling has, but the Center makes it clear that it is focused on showing students what added value they can get from the program. It also has the distinct advantage of being a very unique center, as its focus on digital media and analytics is something to which not all schools are reacting quickly enough to have full, running, dedicated programs. In addition they put emphasis in their marketing on recourses they have such as the social media lab, which is a combination of well-constructed space and state of the art technology that gives students tools to be able to learn real world knowledge they can take with them to the field.

IV. SWOT Analysis

A. Strengths:

The Center for Professional Selling has built within itself a strong ecosystem of extremely passionate and committed individuals who currently give it the ability to succeed. This extends from the faculty to the students and even to corporate partners who all work together to help the program. This extends greatly into its marketing, as the resources they provide in many ways speak for themselves. When students see recruiters coming to campus or here about free tools such as the Center's podcast that they create and publish online they can become even more interested in what the Center has to offer.

These resources often go above and beyond the simple level of an education, and this is the added value that truly can draw more and more customers to their service.

Another strength they currently have is the aspect of the network they have built. This connects all of the varying levels of customer that they have into a web of potential growth. They sit at the center of their own network and because of that can use it to transfer resources from one customer to another and in turn add value without having to do anything but move along information. For example, they can connect corporate partners with students, which helps both parties and is more likely to make them continue to be customers of the Center. Below is a full list of current corporate sponsors and the extent to which they are involved.

Sales Center Partners:

- Aegis Worldwide (Gold Partner)
- All Phase/CED (Gold Partner)
- Gartner (Gold Partner)
- Hilti (Gold Partner)
- Northwestern Mutual (Gold Partner)
- Penske (Gold Partner)
- Enterprise (Silver Partner)
- Impact Networking (Silver Partner)
- NIBCO, Inc. (Silver Partner)
- Rite Hite (Silver Partner)
- Sherwin-Williams (Silver Partner)
- VelocityEHS (Silver Partner)
- AT&T (Bronze Partner)
- Cook Medical (Bronze Partner)
- Mobile Mini (Bronze Partner)
- shi (Bronze Partner)
- Federated Insurance (Introductory Partner)
- Scotlynn USA Division (Introductory Partner)
- USAutomatic Fire & Safety (Introductory Partner)

7

Figure 4. List of Sales Center Partners, Sales Center Website

Their corporate sponsors are diversified among industries and give a large number of varying resources to students adding even more value to their time in the program. This network must be credited as one of its most important assets and truly is a strength that they can effectively use to continue being strong moving forward.

7 "Business Community," *Ball State University Sales Center*, accessed April 15, 2020, <https://www.bsu.edu/academics/centersandinstitutes/professional-selling/business-community>.

B. Weaknesses:

From a marketing analysis point of view, the largest weakness of the center is its approach to communication. In order for the Center to be able to adequately add substantial value to each of its different type of customers it must be able to inform them about what exactly it is that they are doing. Unfortunately, while the Center does have strong interpersonal communication from person to person, it lacks some of the vital assets required to create an outreach plan that can allow it to reach a wider audience. From an internal perspective this is the predominant weakness that the Center faces and should be addressed as part of their strategy. The existence of multiple Facebook pages for the department as well as a lack of use of social media and email makes it hard for perspective students to even figure out how to get involved.

Additionally, the Center must address its ability to stand out as an individual entity within the Department of Marketing. While all of the majors within the Department are able to utilize each other's shared recourses in order to make each of them better, but at the same time this can result in the Center losing some of its ability to be seen as a clear and distinct entity. In order to be able to bolster support from both inside and outside of the university the Center needs to be able to find a way to meld together the marketing aspects of the Department of marketing with its own distinct brand to create an image that stands out from the crowded field of institutes within Ball State.

C. Opportunities:

There are numerous external factors that have to be considered when looking at the future of the sales center. One of the largest is the potential to grow from getting more and more students involved in its alumni base. As the field of sales continues to boom each graduating class of students it sends out into the world can be a massive opportunity for growth. If they are able to harness these students who at one point existed as a part of the institution and turn them into outside actors then they can make them into an asset that only has room to grow.

In addition, they also have the opportunity of increased economic growth. While there is the potential for economic failure in the future, the outlook in the short term

seems good. In addition, they are able to make sure that students are able to go into the career that they are training them for, as sales jobs are some of the most abounded starting positions that exist today. While there are advancements in technology that can potentially harm the growth of sales positions it should go without saying that most technology that is being created today is in actuality bolstering these rolls. Students get the chance to see and interact with platforms like Salesforce in classroom settings. Being able to train students on this type of technology not only ensures that they can get a sales position but also makes sure that they are able to give them the best chance at a high competition job as possible.

D. Threats:

The major threat that the Center is currently facing is the potential for losing any of its three major sources of revenue. If they are not able to adequately address the problems that they are facing then they must be able to keep a constant eye on what their competitors are doing. Other institutes within Ball State as well as other university programs such as that at Purdue pose a real threat. They have to be able to understand that at all times the critical funds and students that they desire are being fought after in a highly competitive market, and for them to be able to stay relevant they have to find a way to increase added value relative to their competitors. These threats can fluctuate at any time, but currently as the economy continues to grow, the availability for funds increases every day, which means that the organizations that are at the top will continue to fight for more and more in order to grow more and more relevant. Any group that exists to take away a source of income for the Center is a threat, which means that they have to be able to find any major changes both institutionally from an education stand point and professionally from a business stand point that can take away from their potential growth.

V. Strategy Recommendations

Analysis of Research:

To be able to formulate a plan that can adequately help the Sales Center grow its already established brand as well as add value to its program, there was a certain degree of research that had to be compiled. One of the more difficult aspects of this research is the fact that the programs that are being discussed in many ways exist like businesses and as a result can be viewed through the lens of normative business theory, but at the same time also are educational programs that can be viewed strictly as academic programs. Being able to create truly usable marketing recommendations means that our research has to be viewed with a hypercritical lens of what aspects of the program are being discussed. Failing to properly assess the way that the Center operates or misattributing theory to aspects that it does not apply to would risk creating recommendations and plans that are ineffective and unhelpful.

First, we must discuss the research that was done to understand not only our competitors, but also to be able to understand the larger environment that exists in. Much of this research posed a very large limitation is being able to decide what the college equivalency of market capital would be. While there are ways to calculate the ranking of programs and universities many of these are subjective and even with them its almost impossible to figure out how much one university program is taking away potential students from another university's program. That is not to say that the research we found was not valuable and accurate, but rather to clarify the starting assumptions that had to be made prior to looking at the data and research.

One strength of our research is the closeness and understanding of the Center from a marketing standpoint. This research was conducted with the specific focus of understanding what has been done with the Sales Center and what can be done to further optimize the programs they have in place. There could have been a large breadth of research that could be gathered to give some "insight" into the program, but everything that was pulled for this part of the report was focused on finding tangible recommendations that can be clearly and succinctly implemented.

This level of work started with a wide amount of primary research in the form interviews and meetings with the head of the Ball State Sales Center, Professor Deva Rangarajan, and the head of the Ball State Center for the Advancement of Digital

Marketing and Analytics, Professor Eric Harvey. Both of these sources gave insight that was used throughout the formulation of this project in order to give a clear understanding of both the actual functions of the Ball State Marketing Department, and also the state of its programs. These meetings were conducted both in-person and over email over the course of the Fall and Spring semesters of the 2019-2020 school year. These meetings helped give a deep level of credibility to recommendations throughout this work as they allowed for an understanding of not just what is desired from those running the program, but also what is logically feasible for the program to enact.⁸

To go about creating this analysis, a wide range of secondary research was compiled with some primary data coming from personal data collection while the author was in charge of the Sales Centers social media channels. The secondary sources were primarily used in order to formulate the big-picture understanding of how a program like this would be able to operate, while the primary data was the backbone of understanding the market that is actually at the core of the Sales Center. Being able to grasp both the theory around programs like this and how they can maximize their effectiveness in reaching potential customers and the data to see who they are actually reaching was a critical advantage to our strategy recommendations. For example there was relevant data gathered about exactly whom the Center is reaching with their Facebook page so that our data could look at the tangible facts of what their current audience is.



Figure 5. Breakdown of Instagram Followers by Age

⁸ Deva Rangarajan, (Head of Ball State Sales Center), in discussion with the author, 2019-20.

Above is our findings drawn from the Sales Center Instagram page during the Fall Semester of 2019. This kind of primary data was at the center of attention when making decisions about the efficacy of this report's recommendations, as there was realistic data that could be trusted and verified helping adjust our decisions.

Now that some basics have been covered about the origins and gathering of our research it is relevant that we cover some of the core findings that shaped the final recommendations for this report. We will break these findings into two key groupings that we used as guides to understand both internal and external factors for decision making: Competitor research and Program Research

B. Competitor Research:

The large core of this research comes from looking at secondary data that looks at trends in regards to university activity and university programs activity as trends or as specific actions taken by programs. Looking at the larger picture allows us to understand expected actions by similar programs. One major factor that our research brought up that seemed to give a particularly weighted importance to understanding the actions that the Sales Center should take was the fact that there is a clear demand for this kind of business from both producers and consumers. Take for example the graph below:

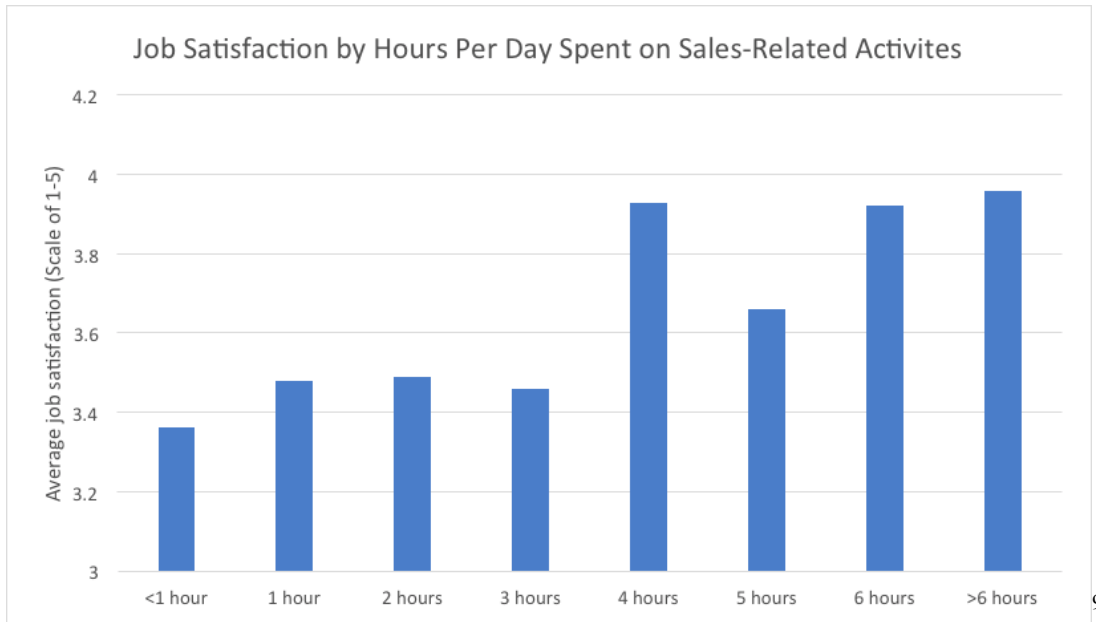


Figure 6. Job Satisfaction by Hours Per Day Spent on Sales-Related Activities

The consumers, in this case students, have lots of things drawing them to any program within the university, but as our research shows there can be some very strong appeal to this kind of field. While a student may not know exactly what they want to do it is safe to assume that any student is going to want to have a career in a field that brings them satisfaction and that they enjoy. This is where this kind of data can help bolster the messaging of the Sales Center, as knowing this, they can deliver messaging that uses this data to get students who may be unsure about their job toward the field of sales. Understanding this is something they can possibly use to get an advantage on their competitors within the University gives them a helpful competitive advantage in bolstering their program.

Another interesting aspect of the competitive landscape for the Center that our research uncovered was the increasing demand for students who have this kind of skill. Take, for example, the graph below looking at percentage growth of business function jobs by type:

⁹ Mark Wayshak, "18 New Sales Statistics for 2019," *Mark Wayshak.com*, Accessed on April 15, 2020, <https://www.marcwayshak.com/sales-statistics/>.

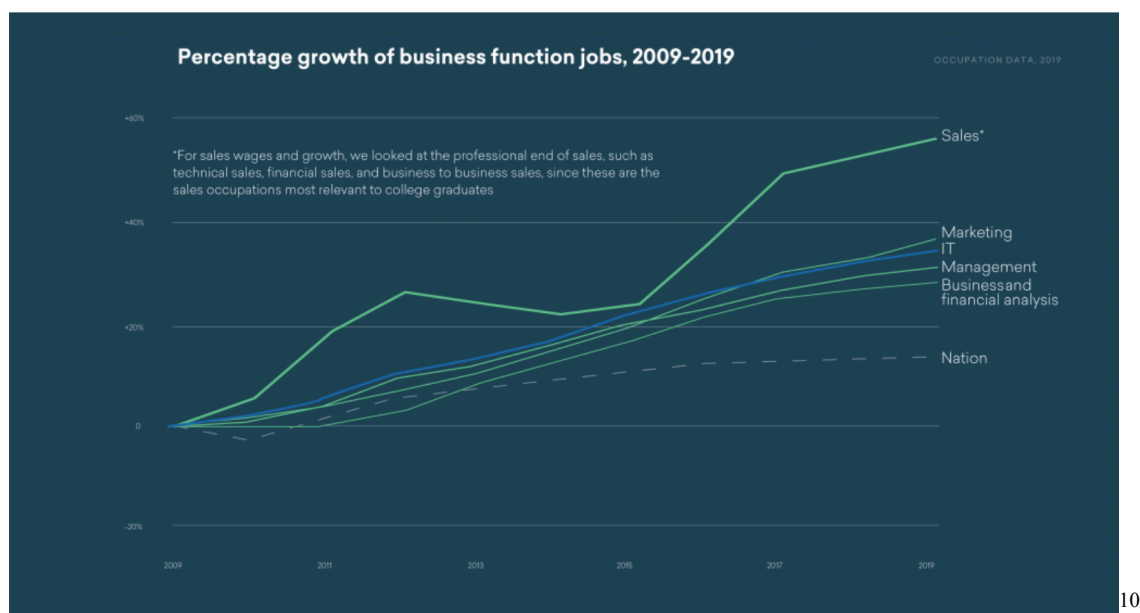


Figure 7. Percentage Growth of Business Functions

There is an increase in demand by percentage for all of the job types listed, but out pacing them at every step along the way is Sales positions. This is key to understanding the extent to which Ball State's program is able to compete as it is incredibly necessary for them to be able to get students into roles right out of the program to continue to draw more students in. If they are able to coordinate consistent program growth with the consistent demand growth for these jobs then they will theoretically be able to maximize the success of the program in the long run. In doing this they will be able to hopefully scale accordingly and keep up to pace with any competitors in regards to growth projections.

These two findings were probably the most important things about the competitive market that our research was unable to uncover. This is because it fundamentally shows an increasing demand for these kinds of jobs from both employers and potential employees. If this is the case then all Ball State's program has to do is focus on their efficiency at being the middleman. This done properly will make both students

¹⁰ Meredith Metsker, Rob Sentz, and Clare Coffey, "Sourcing With Skills: Where to Hire Marketing, PR, and Sales Talent," *Emsi.com*, September 25, 2019. <https://www.economicmodeling.com/2019/09/25/sourcing-with-skills-data/>.

and employers feel like they received an added value. If they are able to do this then there is very little else that the Sales Center needs to focus on in regards to growing its ability to maximize its potential, which means that they can set a strong strategy in motion and move on to focusing on the smaller details that provide key added value, and allowing them to outwork their competitors.

C. Program Research:

Looking at the large-scale things that impact demand for the Sales Center was extremely helpful at giving a baseline of understanding, but it is imperative that specific data from the Sales Center itself be analyzed as well. Much of this data came from personally collected primary data from the Center's main social media communication channels. For example the author was able to pin point key groups that they are able to get their message out to in order to strengthen their ability to grow. The plan was not to focus too much attention on major person-to-person marketing aspects they could grow, but rather on ways they could create a more unified message that reaches the desired audience.

For example, one of the biggest findings from this primary research was the finding that as of last fall 63% of the followers on their current Facebook page are of the age group 25-34. Our research hypothesized that this is the case as a result of them having had multiple pages operating at the same time and having the official one be older than the rest. While this issue has been slightly adjusted, it is important to note that the Sales Center has had zero activity on any channel of social media other than their YouTube channel since December. This fact is important to take into account when looking at the recommendations given in this paper, as the act of ignoring any social media channel for an extended amount of time can severely limit its effectiveness as a tool. While the data currently shows this demographic following there is no way to know the current interest this group has in the program and if they are an audience that can benefit the Center. Rather, they are the bases of a tool that can grow a deeper and more unique audience if used properly. This is also relevant for their Instagram page, which saw 70% of its audience within the 18-24 range. It should be noted that all of their

platforms have a large number of unengaged followers, which means that a pivot away from its current demographic would not be extremely difficult.

VI. Target Market Research and Recommendation

A. Target Market Research:

One of the largest strengths that the Sales Center has is its competency. The professors involved work together to create a program that is able to unify students and motivate them well to the end goal of getting a sales job they are happy with. While the Center's ability to project this idea may be up for debate, it would be quite difficult to say that those running the program do not have a full understanding of the kind of students they are trying to target and educate. For this reason, our marketing recommendation in regards to pinning down a target market of student is not based around our trying to find the right kind of target, but rather conveying as clearly as possible the kind of student that the program is already focused on.

For this research, the author started by first analyzing what kind of student and activities exist within the Sales Center and then comparing it directly to the VALS framework in order to break down a personality group. VALS is extremely helpful in this step as it gives us the ability to choose specific traits that may make up the majority of those involved and thriving in the current system and then use that in order to show why they are the desired target market for the Sales Center. We were able to do this by way of looking at the main values that this group shares and then expanding upon how those are the values that best thrive within the Sales Centers format. VALS was at the core of our target market research as we knew we did not want to go too deeply into abstract constructs both demographically and psychographic that the Center should target. Rather we wanted to look at the already available students and figure out the best way to break them down into identifiable attributes.

B. Target Market:

In this section we will first break down both our primary and secondary target markets and then, for each, explain the steps we took to decide those target markets. In

doing this, we will be able to convey why these are the right target market and what exactly the Center can do to use this information to optimize its marketing strategy.

i. Primary Target Market: Driven and motivated students both male and female between the ages of 18-24 who have a key desire for a challenging and high paying career field and strong social skills.

This group is the kind of student who the Sales Center is able to connect with and help shape into a successful, career focused, individual. They have the core tools necessary to succeed in a field driven by social interactions and commission pay. This kind of student will usually care deeply about a learning environment where they can be somewhat hands on as well as be able to make connections with fellow students and professors.

To help break this down, we looked at the VALS framework and specifically at the traits carried by “Achievers.” This group places an extreme level of importance on Achievement and value, and also takes key satisfaction in life from work and family.¹¹ One key limitation that the VALS framework has that actually works out as a benefit to the Center is the way that people can change over age. People can often be molded by their environment and can change dramatically over time, which means that saying that they are targeting 18-year-old Achievers who will stay that way their whole lives would be very difficult. However, the Sales Center can find students who are receptive to these values and nurture them through their educational process to grow into the business world’s Achievers of tomorrow.

ii. Secondary Target Market: Motivated and successful members of the work force, both male and female, age 40-50 who have a passion for helping those they can mentor and also wield a significant level of influence within their company as a result of years of hard work.

¹¹ “US Framework and VALS Types,” *Strategic Business Insight*, Accessed April 15, 2020. <http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/ustypes.shtml>.

This secondary market is absolutely not of as much significance to the Center as the primary market, but it is important that it be discussed and not forgotten when composing marketing plans. This is a group that will be willing to help students and potentially could open doors to a significant corporate partnership if they wield enough influence. They help expand the network that the Center has and also can create new tools and recourses for students that give added value. From a VALS framework it is not to difficult to pinpoint because for most of the exact same reasons as the primary these will also mostly be Achievers. They are the ones who will both have the means and desire to get involved, which is why there should be some messaging directed at them.

C. Objectives and Strategies:

This report will now discuss our recommended objectives and strategies that could be implemented over the course of a semester in order to jump-start a more unified and cohesive marketing program. While the author could have chosen objectives for any extended period of time it was decided for this report that we would create recommended objectives for simply one semester in order to create goals that could be accomplished through a simple action plan that could then grow into a stronger marketing strategy. While the author believes that the Sales Center has an incredibly strong program with a clear plan and ability to accomplish that plan, the addition of clear and purposeful marketing outreach would enable them to build a more structured brand from top to bottom. Given the flexible and ever changing nature of marketing objectives, a new assessment would need to be conducted after the implementation of these objectives to continue a successful brand promotion strategy.

D. Objectives:

i. Objective 1: Build Familiarity. The Sales Center should assign one dedicated person to post at least twice a week from all social media channels for the duration of a semester.

There needs to be consistent messaging going out to all of the Center's followers on social media so that those both in and outside of the program can better understand

what is going on. By doing this, they can create a consistent brand image that people can follow and see clearly. This will take one extremely dedicated person, but will mean that they are able to grow their following and also always be adapting some form of communication and message. People who may be new to the Sales Center's work may have a very difficult time feeling familiar with them if there is not direct channels of connection and the easiest, and most times effective, way to create that currently would be through the already available social media channels.

iii. Objective 2: Remind people to buy. Host at least one well-advertised sales team showcase and meet and greet per semester.

The sales team is one of the Center's strongest tools, as it attracts students who strive to get good training and real world experience. It is the kind of hands on learning that Achievers in the target market group will absolutely look for. By hosting an event the Center is able to get face-to-face time with prospective students who may not be thinking about actually taking the step to go into sales. Creating this kind of a connection is a doorway to getting students to truly take the leap and join the program. While it will take time and coordination, it utilizes already existing resources and is focused specifically on the target market.

iii. Objective 3: Establish Confidence. The Center should sponsor at least four business school wide alumni, or corporate partner, business school wide speaker events throughout the course of a semester.

By bringing in alumni to speak, the Center is not only showing the entire College of Business and any students who they are and what they care about, but they also would be showing the success that can come from being connected with them. If the Center failed to communicate a clear message right out of the gate about whom they are any ambiguity could lead to potential students or even current students questioning the ability of the Center to truly help them achieve their goals. Every step above and beyond, such as hosting speakers, is a way that they can show that they are fully committed to going

the extra mile and helping students get jobs that they want. This is also relevant because as was discussed in a meeting with Professor Rangarajan on February 12, 2020 the Sales Center already has systems in place that allow for them to easily orchestrate the creation of a speaker series.¹²

E. Justification for Objectives

These objectives are at the core of our recommendation because we believe that they are both achievable and help lead the Center to our main recommendation, which is to create a unified message and deliver that as widely and clearly as possible. The Center currently has an extremely wide range of tools that they use very effectively such as their classes and network, which is why they are able to build a strong group of students who are involved and care about the success of the Center. The issue is that in order to truly create a program of note, from a marketing stand point, they need to be pushing their message past just the students that they interact with on a personal message in order to gain brand ubiquity in regards to being a top level sales program.

One key assessment we made when looking at this concept was the idea of the brand growing through understanding where to target on the IMC pyramid. Take the steps displayed below on the IMC pyramid and where the Center may fall:

¹² Deva Rangarajan, interviewed by Levi Jones, personal interview, Ball State University, February 12, 2020.



Figure 8. IMC Pyramid

The two areas that our strategy and objectives target are the desire step and the awareness step, which could have a truly impactful change on the current success of the Center if better optimized.

The awareness step is the largest group of individuals, and if the use of social media channels were better optimized and a clearer message was broadcast to people not a part of the program that could exponentially grow that pool. Many people within the pool may never even think about the Sales Center again, but the more people who know about its existence, the more people who will inevitably advance to the next steps. Being at a school like Ball State, that is currently pushing a marketing campaign as simple as “We Fly,” puts even more importance on this step as we see a push for clear and consistent messaging. While this step may seem like a large amount of effort for very little return, it is the building block of a proper sales funnel, and if the center wants to grow and draw in more students and funding, it cannot be ignored. The face-to-face approach that has been successful for the Center cannot sustain growth without at least some augmented support from something like social media channels to reach this step on the IMC pyramid.

¹³ Perry Yandel, “Chapter 8 Marketing and Advertising Planning,” *Slideserve*, December 1st, 2019, <https://www.slideserve.com/perry/chapter-8-marketing-and-advertising-planning>

The second place where these objectives specifically target is the desire step. It's one thing to be able to get students just close enough to joining the program, but it's much more to truly draw them into the program and to make them a part of its success. It takes time and effort from professors and faculty and is a commitment. However, it's the final step before they move to take action, and losing them at this point would be a lot of time wasted. By presenting a clear message and doing things like hosting events and showcasing what they deliver students can be pulled through the funnel and into the final step of action. When in a fight as competitive as this one for students, the one thing that the Center can and does focus on is added value. The importance though about this is being able to communicate that they can add that value. Conveying this clearly and in person through these objectives will help get students in place where the only thing between them and joining the Sales Center's program is simply taking the step.

F. Strategy:

From a strategy stand point this entire recommendation is about focusing on how to take all the many functioning parts of the Sales Center and displaying them as one unified whole. Hosting events and working with the social media channels will give them the ability to create a brand message that gives them a step up on any competition not doing this. They can convey what they are doing in a way that draws in new students and also pushes current students to do more. Take, for example, the current state of the Sales Center's YouTube page. It currently boasts a number of extremely helpful videos created by the Sales Center all for free for anyone to use it; however, it only has a total of 104 subscribers.¹⁴

If the Center is going to go through the steps it currently is to create a recourse that could potentially attract the interest of someone from any major trying to learn more about sales then they need to find a way to package this recourse with all of their other messaging. Something that can add value and is not being monetized should be an instant tool pushed through all channels of communication. From in person discussion about it to

¹⁴ "Ball State Sales Center," *YouTube*, April 15, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWzoY5P7gIt74c-kpNODX9A>.

social media posts this is something that gives an advantage to this program that needs to be a part of the whole program's picture if it is going to give promotional benefit.

The big picture of this strategy is that we believe that all of the pieces of a clear brand are in place. Take a circular approach to inbound marketing presented by Hubspot:

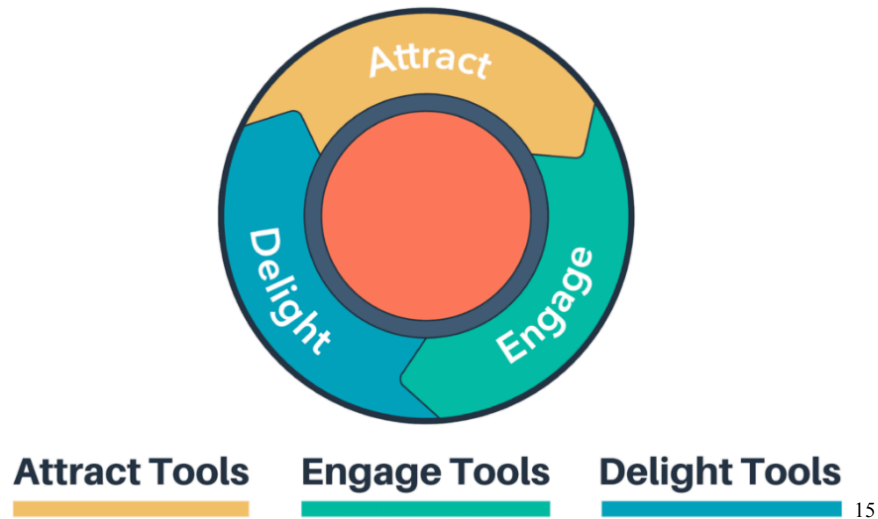


Figure 9. Hubspot Inbound Marketing Cycle

The Center is already optimizing its person-to-person capabilities to Attract, Engage, Delight. However, to optimize their marketing approach through inbound marketing theory and to bring in even more students than they could through their current method they have to create a unified message about who they are and what they do. From there the only additional step necessary is for them to go the extra distance and continue to nurture their new leads that are being generated through the social techniques they already have in place.

It is important to cover once more at the end of this section the decision to make these objectives only one semester long. That may not be a long time in the grand scheme of things, but these objectives are all about growing in areas that are weak and using that to jump start a marketing philosophy that can be carried from semester to semester and also year to year. By implementing these steps, it will become normalized that the Center

¹⁵ "7 Compelling Reasons to Use Inbound Marketing," *Tech-Wonders.Com*, accessed April 15, 2019. <https://www.tech-wonders.com/2019/06/7-compelling-reasons-to-use-inbound-marketing-for-lead-generation.html>.

has a message that they are trying to convey to potential students and will give an avenue for them to continue to advertise to them in the future. The message that they will present is also slightly fluid as it can change as the Center does. As long as they are clearly highlighting who is involved in what they are doing and how that can benefit any potential student, then the message will be true to the core of the Center and give them an avenue to grow. If they change some plans about what they want to do, then the message can be reassessed at any time and changed to fit that. The key is that they can deliver consistent value and scale that accordingly to meet more and more students as they grow.

VII. Action Plan

A. Tactics:

The key to this strategy will fall on creating not just a Plan, but also kicking off a philosophy based around trying to create a cohesive marketing message as a core part of the Sales Center's existence. In order to reach this step, there are several tactics that should be implemented in order to guarantee the fully desired outcome.

Marketing Messaging Lead: To some extent, there needs to be a person who is able to organize the different events and actions going on within the Sales Center and compiles and presents them in a way that can be easily distributed to potential customers. This person does not need to be fully dedicated to only marketing, but at the minimum should create what would be essentially a weekly newsletter of what is going on and how messaging about it should be worded that could be distributed to team members in charge of different channels. In doing this, there would be one person who responsibility could fall on to make sure that nothing going on within the Sales Center is missed, as well as making sure it is to whom information should be delivered.

In addition to one person specifically in charge of the larger picture marketing aspect of things, there should also be attention brought to in-person communication and its effective use. This can be addressed with the implementation of speaker events, but there should also be people in place to be able to help give communication easily when necessary. Current student members who are in place to be able to quickly answer

questions and be a front line of brand communication are a vital resource that should be leveraged to help implementation. The advantage to using students for this is that they are able to grow their personal experience as brand ambassadors, but also are a perfect example of what the Center is doing on the most important level. Social Media and other targeted messaging can be extremely helpful, but there should not be a loss of attention on the importance of in-person events and communication throughout the implementation of this strategy.

Pre-planned events: Any speaker or event should be set in the Sales Center Calendar at least a month before it occurs. It should be stated that this is incredibly time consuming and takes lots of communication; however, once this becomes the norm it becomes much easier. The reason for this is that the channels being used are currently not in a state where communication is optimized. Any social media account will have not been used for at least six months prior and, as a result, will need time to build consistency that will allow posts to be seen. If events are planned at least a month in advance, then it can give those in charge of creating messaging for the events to pin point whom they are trying to reach and how they can do it on the channels they have available.

B. Platforms:

i. Facebook: Facebook should be the main line of projecting messages out past the walls of the university. While falling in popularity among younger people, it is a vital tool for businesses and even most people millennial age up. As a result it is the perfect tool to get a clear and consistent message of what the Sales Center is doing out into the world in order to grow their brand capital. This tool should not be overlooked and would require at a minimum posting of two times a week for the entirety of the first semester. While it would be optimal to post more, it is understood that their may not be feasible resources to accomplish that and, as a result, the suggested bench mark of two times a week is made.

ii. Instagram: Instagram fits much of the same niche as Facebook but focuses in more on current students. It should be used as a tool to both draws in prospective students and to highlight events for current students. The schedule should be also the same as Facebook

and, while it too could benefit from more posting, the consistency of at least starting at twice a week for a semester should be feasible and should at least lay a strong building block for the future.

iii. LinkedIn: LinkedIn should mostly serve as a portal to connect content from other channels and as a place for professionals connected with Center to interact. While it can be difficult to optimally use the existence of a well-connected network, the Sales Center already has the groundwork for LinkedIn to be smoothly integrated. Any time that a professor brings in a presenter or makes a connection between a professional and a student they can be direct to the LinkedIn page to make that network even larger.

iiii. Twitter: Twitter is a difficult channel to approach, but could be very rewarding. If Twitter is to be optimized it should be run by someone who has the time and dedication to use it as often as possible. Where Facebook and Instagram can survive with two posts a week it will take more than that from Twitter to keep the page afloat and increase engagement. We recommend posting 4 times a week and actively sharing and liking posts from other pages that the Sales Center could interact with.(i.e. other Sales Centers or the MCOB.)

YouTube: The recourses that exist on YouTube are both extremely helpful and make the Ball State Center for Professional Selling stand out from its competition. For this reason, the channel should be pushed at every possible chance in order to grow the tool's reach. The brand of the Ball State Sales Center can only be bolstered by a tool like this, which means that on social media, in person, and even on promotional flyers, the YouTube channel should be pushed.

C. Marketing Objectives

i. Target Audience:

Primary: Driven and motivated college students both male and female age 18-24 who have a desire to work in a high paying field.

- High social skills
- Has a desire to succeed
- Wants to impress others
- Probably involved in several campus organizations

Secondary: Also driven and motivated professionals both male and female age 40-50, who have influence in their company and a desire to mentor others.

- Connected family
- Involved in community
- Attended multiple levels of higher education

ii. Objectives:

Objective 1: Build Familiarity: The Sales Center should assign one dedicated person to post at least twice a week from all Social media channels for the duration of a semester.

Objective 2: Remind People to Buy: Host at least one well-advertised sales team showcase and meet and greet per semester.

Objective 3: Establish Confidence: The Center should sponsor at least four business school wide alumni, or corporate partner, speaker events throughout the course of a semester.

iii. Reach or Frequency:

On both a personal level and a marketing level this proposal is going to focus first and foremost on frequency. In the future, growing reach may be more important, but for right now it is vital that the Center deliver consistent and meaningful messaging as often as possible to draw in more students from directly around the Center. Only after this is established should a movement be made, but for the next semester frequency should be the only focus of those in charge of messaging.

iv. Geographic Coverage:

This campaign will focus only on the limited area within Indiana. Because all marketing proposed for this will be based around social media and in-person communication, it makes no sense to try and push outside of the area that can easily be reached. Most of the focus for this semester plan also relies on focusing on Ball States Campus as it focuses more on establishing a culture of communication rather than fully expanding to a national campaign.

v. University Communications:

While not necessarily classical trade communication, it will be vital that the Center keep a line of connection with the Miller College of Business and Ball State as a whole regarding how they are able to push their brand. It is vital that the Sales Center build their own unique brand, but also not break out of or inappropriately use Ball States brand. To be able to do this properly a line of communication must be kept open and any major marketing decisions should be made with the Ball State guidelines in mind.

D. Big Picture:

Ultimately, this plan is about creating a clear and polished brand message for the Center. From the interpersonal communication, to planned events, to social media integration, it is all about creating a brand that can be understood and can grow. This is relevant not just for the future of the Sales Center, but also for any person of interest to this program or programs of a like style. While this plan has been specifically curated for the current state of the Sales Center, it can easily apply to any number of academic programs. Any University trying to start a Sales program or trying to optimize their program could easily implement these objectives in order to start the branding strategy of their program in the right direction. If there are programs in place to help students and to make them viable future employees, any program should focus on finding objectives that can bring together all singular programs and turn them into a well-rounded and marketable brand. If this is accomplished, then every new event moving forward and every new message put out will carry the collective weight of the entire program, and will not have to stand out entirely on its own.

E. Target Plan Schedule:

i. Social Schedule:

Table 1. Social Media Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Facebook	Post				Post		
YouTube	Keep creating content and consistently push on other platforms						
Twitter	Post	Share and Like	Post	Share and Like	Post	Share and Like	Post
Instagram	Post				Post		

ii. Event Calendar:

Table 2. Event Calendar for Fall Semester

August	September	October	December
13th	17th	15th	4th
Speaker	Speaker	Speaker	Sales Showcase

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